

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MASERU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 149240

MASERU FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, BC

SUBJECT: REACTIONS OF PRESIDENT KHAMA TO PRIVATE US VISIT

REF: STATE 146919

1. PRESIDENT KHAMA, ACCOMPANIED BY LADY KHAMA, HIS TWIN SONS, AND ADVISERS PHIL STEENKAMP AND JOE LEGWAILA, VISITED THE US JUNE 6-9 AND RECEIVED AN HONORARY DEGREE FROM HARVARD UNIVERSITY JUNE 8. WHATEVER DISAPPOINTMENT KHAMA MAY HAVE FELT OVER HIS INABILITY TO OBTAIN A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER DURING THIS PRIVATE VISIT APPEARED TO BE CONSIDERABLY ASSUAGED BY (A) RECEIPT OF THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS ON KHAMA'S HONORARY DEGREE (REFTEL); (B) HIS WARM RECEPTION AT A DINNER IN HIS HONOR HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR YOUNG AT USUN JUNE 8; AND
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(C) THE OFFER OF A MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE, WHICH KHAMA RELUCTANTLY (ON THE ADVICE, WE BELIEVE, OF HIS PHYSICIAN) DECLINED. KHAMA'S PARTY ALSO EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR EXTENSIVE FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE WHICH DEPARTMENT WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE INFORMALLY DURING VISIT. NEVERTHELESS, THE NET IMPRESSION ON KHAMA AND HIS PARTY CREATED BY THIS VISIT MAY HAVE BEEN THAT THE US REGARDS HIM AND HIS COUNTRY

WITH GENUINE FRIENDSHIP BUT ATTACHES GREATER POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO OTHER FRONT-LINE LEADERS IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

2. FOLLOWING KHAMA'S DEPARTURE FROM BOTSWANA, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED TO EXTEND AN INVITATION TO COME TO WASHINGTON FOR A MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE ON JUNE 9. THIS INVITATION WAS CONVEYED IN A TELEPHONE CALL TO KHAMA BY AMBASSADOR YOUNG ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 6. ON THE ADVICE OF HIS PHYSICIAN, WHO HAD URGED THE PRESIDENT NOT TO ACCEPT ANY LAST-MINUTE ADDITIONS TO HIS ITINERARY, KHAMA DECLINED THE INVITATION ON GROUNDS OF HEALTH BUT ACCEPTED AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S INVITATION TO DINNER AT USUN JUNE 8 SINCE HE ALREADY PLANNED TO BE IN NEW YORK AT THAT TIME.

3. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT KHAMA'S REFUSAL OF THE LAST-MINUTE INVITATION TO THE WHITE HOUSE REFLECTED ANY GROUNDS OTHER THAN THOSE HE ADDUCED -- FRAGILE HEALTH AND A DISINCLINATION TO MAKE ANY FURTHER ALTERATIONS TO HIS SCHEDULE. AFTER TAKING AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S CALL, KHAMA RETURNED TO A CONVERSATION WITH HIS AIDES AND AF/S OFFICER MCCORMICK. HE APPEARED TO BE PLEASED THAT BOTH INVITATIONS HAD BEEN EXTENDED BUT REMARKED THAT IT WAS SIMPLY "TOO MUCH" TO ARRANGE AT THIS LATE DATE EITHER THE TRIP TO WASHINGTON OR THAT TO BONN. THIS LAST REFERRED TO AN INVITATION HE HAD JUST RECEIVED THROUGH STEENKAMP FROM THE FRG TO VISIT BONN ON JUNE 9. STEENKAMP HAD RECOMMENDED AGAINST THE LATTER
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ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WAS "UNREASONABLE" TO EXPECT PRESIDENT KHAMA TO AGREE TO A VISIT ON SUCH A RUSHED BASIS. KHAMA WAS TIRED, STEENKAMP TOLD MCCORMICK, AND "THE GERMANS" (HE CAREFULLY AVOIDED REFERENCE TO THE US) "COULD HAVE ORGANIZED THIS EARLIER." SINCE THE EARLIEST DATE ON WHICH THE SFRC COULD HOST A LUNCHEON FOR KHAMA AS JUNE 12; THIS ALSO PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO ARRANGE.

4. CONCERN FOR KHAMA'S HEALTH WAS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE TRIP. AN INTERVIEW FOR USICA AND THE VOA SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 7 HAD TO BE POSTPONED AT HIS PHYSICIAN'S INSISTENCE. FACILITIES FOR RESTING DURING COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES WERE CAREFULLY PROVIDED BUT NOT NEEDED.

5. COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES THEMSELVES WENT SMOOTHLY. ESCORTED BY DEAN GRAHAM ALLISON, KHAMA WAS AWARDED AN HONORARY DOCTORATE IN LAWS FOR HIS "ELOQUENCE, ACUITY, AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS." PRESIDENT BOK LAUDED HIS "LEADER(SHIP) OF AN EXEMPLARY AFRICAN DEMOCRACY., COMMENCEMENT TRADITION DOES NOT CALL FOR ANY REMARKS BY HONORANDS. STUDENT GROUPS HAD CALLED FOR A DEMONSTRATION DEMANDING US DISINVESTMENT FROM SOUTH AFRICA, BUT EXCEPT

FOR SCATTERED BANNERS, THIS DID NOT MATERIALIZE. PRESS COVERAGE WAS DOMINATED BY PRESENCE ON THE PLATFORM OF SOVIET DISSIDENT AUTHOR ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN, WHO RECEIVED SUSTAINED SPONTANEOUS ACCLAIM. KHAMA WAS INTRODUC-

ED TO SOLZHENITSYN AT DINNER HOSTED BY PRESIDENT BOK JUNE 7. FOLLOWING THE CEREMONIES, KHAMA AND AIDES ATTENDED LUNCHEON HOSTED BY PROF. ROBERT ROTBERG WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF PRESS AND FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF BOSTON.

6. AT USUN DINNER JUNE 8 AMBASSADOR YOUNG LAUDED KHAMA AND BOTSWANA FOR RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO RESOLVING SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLITICAL AND DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS. KHAMA, SPEAKING SLOWLY AND QUIETLY, RE-CONFIDENTIAL

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SPONDED THAT AFRICANS TOO OFTEN IN THEIR FRUSTRATION REPROACH THE WEST FOR ITS FAILURE TO RESOLVE AFRICAN PROBLEMS, "FORGETTING THAT IT WAS WE WHO ORIGINALLY ASKED THE WEST TO ASSIST US IN SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS AND THAT THEY ARE AFTER ALL LARGELY OF OUR OWN MAKING., KHAMA SAID INSTEAD OF SUCH PETULANCE, AFRICANS SHOULD BE THANKFUL THAT THE WEST WAS NOT WASHING ITS HANDS OF AFRICA'S TROUBLES AND THAT IT REMAINED WILLING AND DETERMINED TO HELP WITH THE DIFFICULT PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING JUST AND PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS.

7. USUN DINNER, WHICH INCLUDED A NUMBER OF KHAMA'S PERSONAL FRIENDS AMONG US BUSINESS AND UN COMMUNITIES, WAS ATTENDED BY DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY PETTERSON, AMBASSADOR MCHENRY, AND TOM THORNTON OF THE NSC, WHO HANDCARRIED SIGNED LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM PRESIDENT CARTER (REFTEL). KHAMA'S GRACIOUS REMARKS AND THE CONVERSATION OF HIS SENIOR AIDES INCLUDING STEENKAMP AND LEGWAILA SUGGEST THAT HE APPRECIATED THE EFFORTS WHICH WENT INTO EXTENDING AS HOSPITABLE A WELCOME AS POSSIBLE AND STILL HOPES THAT HE MAY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OFFICIAL MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT, THE SECRETARY, AND SFRC. VANCE

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